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EXCERPTS from "One Year Later" Study
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The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders made its report to the President and the nation on March 1, 1968. This is an assessment of where we stand a year later in relation to the Commission's diagnosis and warnings: whether the nation is closer to, or further from, the specter of social division raised by the Commission; whether the broad changes of attitudes, priorities, and policies advocated by the Commission have been made....It is, in a sense, an annual report of the nation's domestic crisis, as defined by the Commission; an attempt to determine where we are and where we seem to be heading in terms of our troubled urban centers.

The cycle of poverty in the slums and ghettos has been slowed by the counterforce of the whirring economy. Unemployment is down and income is up, even in the hardest-to-reach places and categories of people. But the cycle of dependence, measured by the number of welfare recipients, has accelerated more than the Commission anticipated.

Education did not reduce the disparity: Blacks with eight years or less of school had incomes 75 per cent of whites with the same; black college graduates had incomes 74 per cent of their white counterparts. Black college graduates earned \$13 more per year, at the median, than white high school graduates.

Black teenagers in poverty neighborhoods, in the final quarter of 1967, had an unemployment rate of a staggering 34 per cent, worse than even the Commission had estimated. By 1968 it had been reduced to 27.3 per cent. The gain was highly significant, but did not remove the problem of idle youth from the streets of the slums and ghettos.

The Commission divided its employment goals between the public and private sectors, and between job-training and job-creation. In the past year, there was increased private-public cooperation on job training that produced measurable progress. The progress in job creation was more limited, and almost entirely on the private side.

Blacks own and operate less than 1 per cent of the nearly five million private businesses in the country.

There are three chief factors which serve as impediments to black entrepreneurship: difficulty in obtaining capital, lack of technical expertise or know-how, and uncertain markets. Up until very recently, banks have been most reluctant to make loans to blacks, particularly those involved in high-risk ghetto ventures; and blacks are usually unable to obtain enough equity or collateral to persuade them to change their minds. Insurance, too, is a severe problem: Most ghetto businessmen can buy it only at prohibitive prices, if at all; and in a vicious circle, lack of coverage tends to mean lack of credit.

Existing programs concentrate on the first two impediment-requirements, capital and managerial expertise, with a secondary emphasis on the problem of markets. There is no shortage of programs, either in government or the private sector; the main inadequacy seems to be lack of coordination among them, plus of course, the inevitable limitations of funds.

A particularly hopeful surge of ghetto entrepreneurship has been among youth organizations in cities across the country, many of which started as gangs and are now involved in a variety of businesses from film-making to soul food shops....It has been an uphill effort and the stakes are high: Failure for the black youths, as for all blacks whose strivings have gone beyond jobs to business ownership, could bring a special kind of disillusionment with the American system.

As discussion of Negro entrepreneurship went on, the welfare system continued to be the major growth industry of the slums and ghettos to the despair of both officials and recipients....In fiscal 1967, the total cost of welfare was \$6,981,511,000. In fiscal 1968, it was \$8,866,220,000.

These are large figures, but not large enough to lift the recipients of welfare above poverty. The economic report to the President for 1969 said that the level of assistance in federally aided welfare programs is nowhere above the poverty line.

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Why are welfare loads rising in tandem with aggregate employment and income? A clue may be found in the fact that the number and proportion of Negro families in central cities headed by females continues to rise, and reached 35 per cent in 1968. Of Negro families in the cities with incomes of \$2,000 or less, more than half have no father in the home....For these broken families the vicious cycle of inadequate income and social disorganization continues unabated by general prosperity.

Education in the slums and ghettos is a failure. The Commission backed this flat assertion with evidence that "in the critical skills--verbal and reading ability--Negro students fall farther behind whites with each year of school completed...." The Commission's typical participant in civil disorders was, among his other characteristics, a high-school dropout.

Sheer numbers can overwhelm the teacher in a disadvantaged school. Negro school enrollments have increased faster than total Negro central city population.

By the time the Commission report was issued, polarization already had occurred in the educational community.

One year later: The indictment of failure passed on education in the slums and ghettos is just as valid and even more familiar. But the ferment stirred by the two earlier education reports and accelerated by the Commission report has increased to the point where it is rocking--in some instances, even toppling--the educational establishment. Unlike other drives for change in the schools, this one looks as if it will not end with talk: There is a discernible shift to action--clarification of strategies, heightened conflict, perhaps the beginnings of genuine change. Not all of the turmoil is progress.

The rhetoric of control is more widespread than its practice; few parents really want to "run" their schools. But they do want something called "accountability," where they can look at and assess what the schools are accomplishing.

If disillusionment plagues the goal of integration, it is no less the case with the Commission's parallel education strategy, the improvement of ghetto schools through compensatory programs. It has struck the supporters of such programs, who had overemphasized the possibilities of quick success; the economizers, who don't like spending all that money, and now a third group which says the programs won't work until students achieve a sense of destiny control in community-run schools.

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There is, nevertheless, a rethinking underway of the legal and financial responsibilities of states. If education is indeed so central to curing poverty, the quality of service--or at least dollar input--can no longer be a geographical accident, producing inequities not only between one region or state and others, but between city and suburb in the same metropolitan area.

The near-despair surrounding education in the slums and ghettos has had an impact, although not in terms of producing a massive solution to sever the predictability that now exists between a child's race and family income to his schooling. No one has a remedy that he can prove works. Nevertheless...schools have introduced many changes to cope with a failure that no one even talked about less than a decade ago.

One Year Later: Two additional Presidential study groups have told the nation all it needs to know--perhaps more than it wants to know--about housing problems and programs....Housing construction for the poor and near poor increased significantly, but there was not enough money behind the new national commitment to assure its achievement in the years just ahead.

Many cities continued to build most of their public housing in ghetto areas where segregation was inevitable. Often the reason was that they could not find sites for it anywhere else. Public resistance to living near housing for the minorities and poor can be as formidable in the cities as in the suburbs.

The difficulty in finding sites, more than the shortage of appropriations, has been a major deterrent to construction of more public housing.

As long as such obstacles stand, it will be impossible to achieve the Commission's goal of opening broad new housing choices outside of the ghettos to the minorities and the poor. And as long as this remains impossible, it will be unlikely that the 1968 Act's production goals for subsidized housing will be achieved, even with an increase in public and private investment.

It will take time to convert federal housing programs into tools for opening new choices, and meanwhile millions live, willingly or unwillingly, in the shabby environment of the slums and ghettos.

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After summer, 1967, the press was filled with news of cities equipping themselves with everything from chemical spray to heavy armor in preparation for what one author called "The Second Civil War." What was actually happening was a sophisticated re-examination of the civic response to civil disorder, instigated by the Commission itself.

Civil disorder took at least one new and troubling turn in the past year....The Civil Disorders Commission had concentrated on turbulence in the ghetto. The Violence Commission saw a linkage to turbulence on the campus.

Since Columbia, campus conflicts at San Francisco State College, University of California at Berkeley, University of Wisconsin, Duke University, Brandeis, and elsewhere have had a distinctly racial cast; the black student movement has become the cutting edge of the black protest movement. What is most notable in the past year, however, is the extension of both from the college campus and the street to the high schools.

There were worrisome indications in the past year that the police were moving further toward an "our side-their side" mentality and seeing their role as something more than public service.

A year later, there is probably no mayor of any city of reasonable size who is not more aware of the needs and problems of the slums and ghettos....Communications have increased between city hall and the ghetto, which is not to say that the results are universally positive. Structural change is rare. Still, a new concept of local democracy is being worked out in many cities, mainly through the slow and often painful tugs-of-war of democratic politics. Gradually the ghetto residents and their spokesmen are becoming participants in the tug-of-war along with other interest groups, some of which resist their presence.

Blacks moved steadily last year toward the concept that the only way to get fundamental change in city hall is to run it....The total number of black elected officials in the country now is estimated at well over 800.

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Having a Negro mayor does not automatically lead to the solution of ghetto problems. There remains the critical matter of resources to effect change, the shortage of which may produce even larger frustrations if a black man is put in charge and doesn't deliver.

Somewhere in a spectrum between readiness for revolution and acceptance of the system, between advocacy of complete separation from white society and belief in the goal and possibility of integration, is to be found the current mood of the nation's blacks. The indicators seem to have moved toward militancy in the past year, but there is ample room for such movement short of the extreme: Black pride need not mean black racism; separatism can be a means rather than an end, a way of "getting things together" so blacks can negotiate their place in society more as equals in strength; black rage can turn to constructive action rather than violence. Precisely where the indicators stand now is impossible to say.

What will the warmer weather bring...? Those who say improved police response has kept things quiet, or at least less deadly, have the 1968 statistics on their side. Those who say the residents of slums and ghettos are busy working for community improvement and control--"too busy to riot"--have an aggressive kind of hope on their side, which may prove contagious. But there remains a wide gulf between the way blacks and whites see America, which may again prove explosive, and the fuse is of indeterminate length.

The significant question is not whether black-white polarization will cause disorders next summer but whether it will become a permanent American institution.

The nation has not reversed the movement apart. Blacks and whites remain deeply divided in their perceptions and experiences of American society. The deepening of concern about conditions in the slums and ghettos on the part of some white persons and institutions has been counterbalanced--perhaps overbalanced--by a deepening of aversion and resistance on the part of others. The mood of the blacks, wherever it stands precisely in the spectrum between militancy and submission, is not moving in the direction of patience. The black neighborhoods in the cities remain slums, marked by poverty and decay; they remain ghettos, marked by racial concentration and confinement. The nation has not yet made available--to the cities or the blacks themselves--the resources to improve these neighborhoods enough to make a significant change in their residents' lives. Nor has it offered those who might want it the alternative of escape.

A year later, we are a year closer to being two societies, black and white, increasingly separate and scarcely less unequal.

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